

## **The Work Experience Program (WEP): Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. What is the Work Experience Program (WEP)?**

The Work Experience Program (WEP) offers work experience opportunities to individuals who are receiving cash assistance from the state. These work placement activities help our cash assistance recipients develop the general skills, training, knowledge, and work habits needed to acquire non-subsidized employment.

### **2. Who is eligible to participate in the WEP?**

Participants in the WEP are adults receiving cash assistance through Financial Assistance to Needy Families (FANF).

### **3. Am I the WEP participant's actual employer?**

You "Host" the WEP participant at your business by providing the individual with an opportunity to gain work experience in a supervised setting, side-by-side with your own staff, so that the WEP participant receives a work experience similar to your paid employees. The primary difference is that you do not pay the WEP participant for the work they do.

### **4. I do not pay the WEP participant? The WEP participant doesn't receive wages?**

You, as the WEP work host, pay no wages to the WEP participant, nor do you pay any other form of reimbursement to the participant or to the state. Instead, the WEP participant receives cash assistance from the state and is eligible for child care, mileage, and other reimbursements, all subsidized by the New Hampshire Employment Program (NHEP).

### **5. What about Workers' Compensation and Health Insurance?**

You, as the WEP work host, do not provide either for the WEP participant. The state is considered the employer for Workers' Compensation purposes and the WEP participant receives health insurance through Medicaid. WEP participants are instructed about how to report a workplace injury. In the event an incident occurs at your business, it is recommended that you document the circumstances and notify your general liability carrier.

### **6. What if the work requires a criminal background check or is of a confidential nature?**

All WEP participants are subject to the same policies and procedures as your paid employees. Background checks and confidentiality agreements, if used by your agency, should be required of the WEP participant, and enforced as you would with your paid employees.

### **7. How many hours is a WEP participant expected to work?**

Program guidelines allow WEP work hosts and WEP participants flexibility when negotiating work hours. Hourly requirements can be different for each WEP participant. Ideally, the WEP work host offers the WEP participant about 20 to 30 hours per week. However, if you only have a smaller block of time to offer, then the WEP participant may combine this time with other activities to meet his or her full program requirements.

### **8. What are my responsibilities if I "Host" a WEP participant?**

- **WEP Agreement:** WEP work hosts sign an agreement specifying the WEP participant's work schedule and duties. The typical arrangement is 16 weeks, but may be shorter or longer. The agreement may be terminated at any time if needed.
- **Supervision, Structure, and Safety:** WEP work hosts are expected to offer a safe, structured, and supervised WEP experience. This includes work site orientation and necessary training. Additionally, oversight and instruction as to work assignments, such as whom to report to and address questions to, should be provided to the WEP participant.
- **Attendance Verification:** WEP participants are responsible for documenting their attendance by maintaining weekly time sheets. By signing the attendance sheet, you are verifying the WEP participant's actual hours of attendance. You may also keep your own time sheet, however that is not required.

**9. What happens if problems arise during the placement?**

As with other individuals at the work site, the WEP work host should attempt to identify and resolve problems that arise. If a problem cannot be resolved, the WEP participant's Community Job Specialist (CJS) is available to assist in the resolution. Also, the WEP agreement can be terminated if the participant fails to comply with placement requirements.

**10. How do I arrange to have a WEP participant placed in my organization or business?**

Once you decide to become a WEP work host, you will develop a job description with a NHEP CJS from your local Workplace Success Career Center. The job description should include the title of the position, number of hours, duties and responsibilities, skills to be attained by the WEP participant, requirements of the position, and who will be the WEP participant's supervisor. This information is shared with other NHEP representatives. These representatives will then match the position with those WEP participants possessing the skills you specified. NHEP representatives will send you candidates to interview. You decide if you want to place any of the WEP participants within your organization.

**11. Am I required to hire the WEP participant?**

No. The main purpose is to give the WEP participant a current, real-world work experience and help the WEP participant develop skills for the workplace and obtain a current work reference. However, and at any time, if the WEP work host wants to hire the WEP participant, they are encouraged to do so. The focal point of NHEP is to help WEP participants re-enter the labor market.

**12. Can I have more than one WEP participant?**

Yes. You may have as many WEP participants as you need, in various positions, *as long as you can provide a valuable work experience and appropriate supervision.*

**Important Note:** Your WEP participant can provide you valuable assistance. However, remember that the WEP experience is primarily employment training for our WEP participants, and your guidance will be what makes that training successful. **WEP participants may not replace a paid position at your site.**

**13. How long does it take to have a WEP participant placed in my organization or business?**

You, the WEP work host, may identify the start date. We place WEP participants as promptly as possible; however, it may take several weeks. Similar to the job market, the WEP participant's and WEP work host's interests and skills must be matched. This means the right match may not happen immediately.

**14. What are some benefits to the WEP work host and the WEP participant?**

The WEP work host benefits by having extra personnel to assist with work needs. WEP work hosts are also provided a no-risk opportunity to evaluate a WEP participant for employment. Ask your CJS for information on additional WEP host benefits. WEP participants are provided work experience and can explore work interests while developing marketability.

**15. Can a Community Service Program "Host" a WEP?**

Yes. A community service program, that serves a useful community purpose, can participate in WEP. Placement of WEP participants must be structured, supervised and designed to improve the WEP participant's employability.

**16. Who do I call with questions about placing a WEP participant in my organization or business?**

Call the CJS at the WPS Career Center nearest you.

Workplace Success Career Center Phone Numbers			
Berlin 752-3500	Derry: 216-8860	Littleton 444-2011	Portsmouth: 430-4910
Claremont 542-6236	Keene 357-1822	Manchester 668-3148	Rochester 994-0130
Concord 223-2305	Laconia 524-4367	Nashua: 889-0531	Tamworth: 323-7321